
Torch

Fall 9-1-1992

Torch, Fall 1992

Cedarville College

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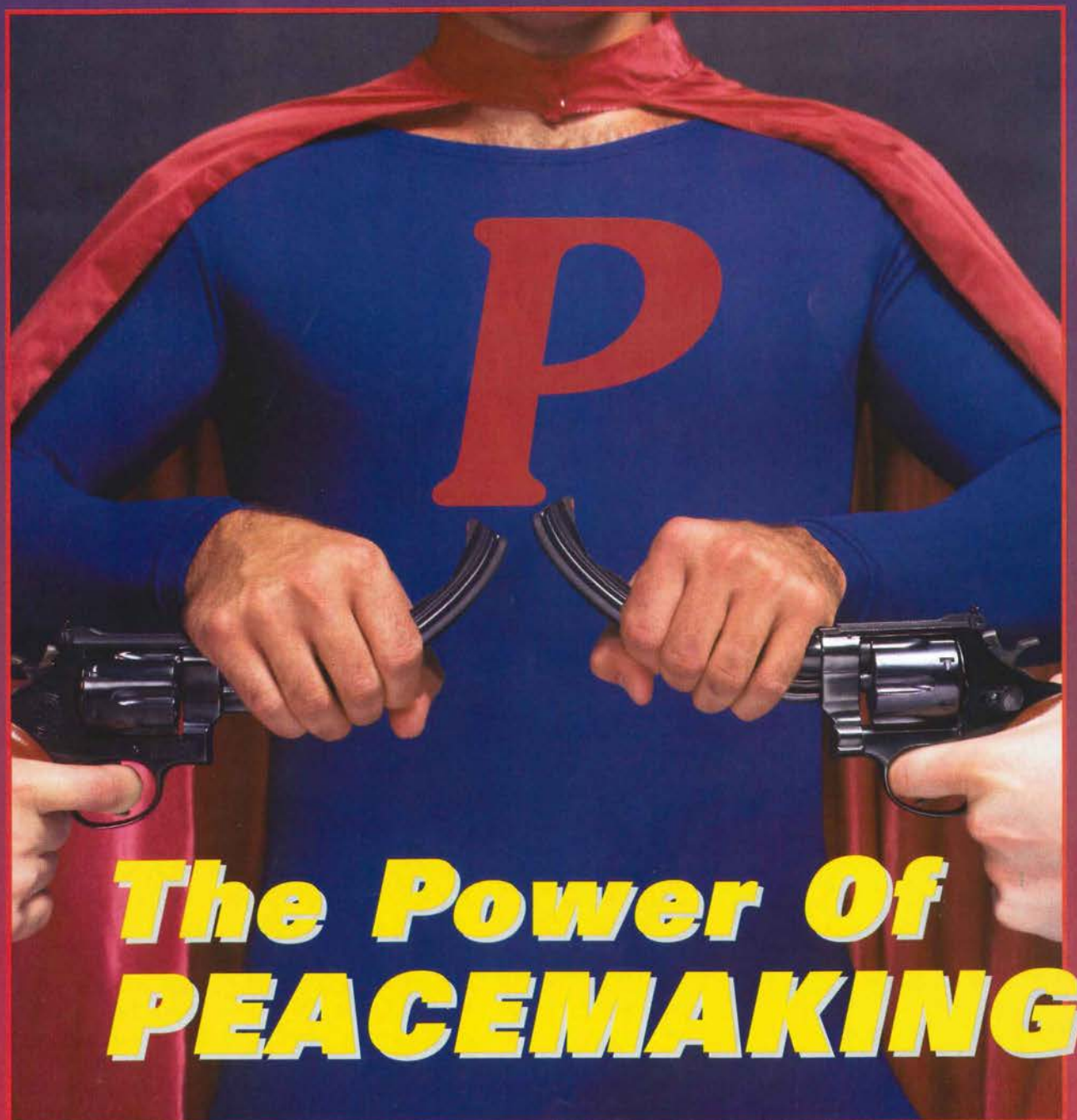
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Cedarville College, "Torch, Fall 1992" (1992). *Torch*. 49.
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CEDARVILLE TORCH



***The Power Of
PEACEMAKING***



on line With

Paul Dixon

President
Cedarville College

Leaders In Peacemaking

The world is looking for peace. It is found in only two places. One is in heaven and the other is in the believer's heart. Jesus Christ is in both places.

Christians are supposed to have a handle on peace. Our God is described in Hebrews 13:20 as "the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ." Though we warred against Him in our sinful, lost state, He took the initiative to reconcile us unto Himself through the gift of His Son, the Prince of Peace. Paul said in Colossians 1:20 that Christ has made peace through the blood of His cross. Ephesians emphatically states, "For He is our peace." We are no longer at war with God for "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

No wonder our Lord's Sermon on the Mount commissions us as **peacemakers** for we are called the children of God (Matthew 5:9).

How are we progressing with our assignment as peacemakers? I want to share my heart and speak plainly to every Christian leader. If we are leaders, we are teachers—in our

homes, in our churches, in our schools, in the workplace. What are our spouses, children, students, church members, and employees learning from us about being peacemakers?

Do they see us looking for negative points in others to make war? Or rather do we channel our energy toward recognizing positive points in people in order to make peace and to develop friendships?

Now this has nothing to do with "appeasement" at the expense of truth. This is about living in peace (2 Corinthians 13:11); living in peace with all men (Romans 12:18); and being at peace among ourselves (1 Thessalonians 5:13). Paul challenged Timothy to pray "for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:2).

All government officials are not against Christianity. They are not necessarily mapping out a strategy to destroy us, our families, our schools, and our churches. Let us treat them with a Christ-honoring spirit with the possibility that we

may get an opportunity to communicate our convictions. Our students are watching!

In the recent national election we had an opportunity to campaign, to debate, and to vote. The election is over. Psalm 75:6-7 tells us that God puts one down and promotes another. The Sovereign One is in control. Be at peace. He is! Pray for those who lead us!

All Christians who differ with us on minor issues are not our enemies or enemies of the gospel. They may not do things the way we do, have the same friends, preach in the same places, use the same translation, or listen to the same music. But can we not give them the freedom to practice their faith without our exposing their every difference in the latest "Christian scandal sheet?" Let's model Paul the peacemaker and "rejoice that Christ is preached." Our students are watching!

All accounts of what brothers and sisters in the faith have done or said are not necessarily true. If they are, as David said, "Tell it not in Gath" (2 Samuel 1:20). David did not want the outside world to rejoice in Israel's problems. Do not let the world hear rumors from us. They probably are not true anyway. Let's give one another the benefit of trust. Recently, in response to an accusation against someone, I defended the accused. To this day I do not know the truth of the matter, but I presume innocence until facts prove otherwise.

Over 2,150 students are a part of our Cedarville College family this fall quarter. I want them to learn from us as trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff how to be biblical peacemakers. Peacemakers cannot be self-centered and self-serving. Nor are they vindictive and unforgiving. Peacemakers have experienced the forgiveness of the God of peace and are intent on taking the message of the Prince of Peace to a warring world.

Our students are watching, and so is a troubled world!

Peace Preacher

Wouldn't you like to hear Jesus preach? Just for once to listen to His actual voice, instead of somebody else's best effort to convey His message? What would He say?

The Bible records many of His words, but the Apostle Paul summarized Jesus' message this way:

He came and preached peace to you... (Ephesians 2:17).

People in Jesus' day needed to hear about peace. They lived in a world filled with racial strife, rumors of war, and constant conflict. Sound familiar?

Worst of all, every person had declared war against God. In their sin, they mocked Him, and fought to have their own way. They deserved God's judgment and wrath, but the holy, gracious God responded in love. Jesus came to earth to offer peace.

He saw people living in a harsh, hopeless world and said,

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27).

He wept over people's separation from His loving Heavenly Father and told His disciples,

...the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God...I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:27, 33).

Jesus preached peace, and then He became our peace. He willingly died on a cross and surrendered His life to pay the penalty for our sin. He lay buried in a tomb, and then rose from the dead to give us the only way to live with God forever. Both God and man, He offered an eternal peace between the two, purchased at tremendous cost to Himself. Anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved from judgment. Have you believed in Him as your Savior?

For more information contact:

Harold Green
Vice President for Christian Ministries
Cedarville College
P.O. Box 601
Cedarville, OH 45314

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Editor

Dr. Martin Clark

Managing Editor

Doug Miller

Associate Editors

Martha Baldwin
Judy Johnson

Proofreaders

Irene Gidley
Lorraine Hoffmann

Graphics

Les Troyer

Photography

Scott Huck

Cedarville Torch

Vol. 14 No. 4
Fall Issue, 1992

Published by
Cedarville College
P.O. Box 601
Cedarville, OH 45314
Dr. Paul Dixon, President
NO PAID
SUBSCRIPTIONS

Cedarville Torch

is published quarterly for
alumni and friends of
Cedarville College.
Comments and requests for
extra copies should be
directed to
Doug Miller
Managing Editor
Cedarville Torch
P.O. Box 601
Cedarville, OH 45314
513-766-7806

*"...the things that thou hast
heard from me among many
witnesses, the same commit thou
to faithful men, who shall be able
to teach others also."*

2 Timothy 2:2

CAMPUS NEWS

Lutzer Lectures At Bible Conference



Erwin Lutzer challenged the college family and friends at Cedarville's Fall Bible Conference September 28-October 2. Since 1980 Dr. Lutzer has served as senior pastor of the Moody Church in Chicago. He is the featured speaker on The Moody Church Hour and Songs in the Night radio programs. He has authored numerous books and presents Bible messages at conferences and seminars throughout the United States.

A graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and Loyola University, Dr. Lutzer pastored Edgewater Baptist Church in Chicago and served as assistant professor of Bible and theology at Moody Bible Institute before starting his pastorate at the Moody Church.

2,172 Record Enrollment

The 2,172 students who started classes fall quarter at Cedarville College marked an enrollment increase of over 80 percent in the 14 years since Dr. Paul Dixon became president. The class of 593 freshmen includes 49 President's Scholars, who scored in the top two percent in the nation on the ACT or SAT tests. Ten percent of all freshmen were valedictorians of their high school classes, and 10 are national merit finalists or semi-finalists. Nearly 70 percent of new students come from outside Ohio. Cedarville students represent 43 states and nine countries.

Cedarville Named To Templeton Honor Rolls

The John Templeton Foundation has named Cedarville College to two honor rolls for 1992.

The Foundation's Honor Roll for Character Building Colleges is an annual listing of schools which "best...encourage the development of strong moral character among students." Cedarville and one other Ohio college were among 111 institutions honored nationwide.

The Honor Roll for Free Enterprise Teaching identifies schools that have "an institutional commitment to traditional Western political and economic philosophies." Cedarville College practices as well as teaches the principles of free enterprise. The College neither solicits nor accepts government funds for operations or capital projects. The active Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) club promotes the concept in area schools and sponsors an annual Free Enterprise Day on campus.

Cedarville Dedicates New Academic Building

As part of Homecoming ceremonies October 17, Dr. Paul Dixon led in the dedication of the new Engineering/Nursing/Science Center. Approximately 4,000 people toured the facility Homecoming weekend as many students showed friends and family the exceptional facilities the students use on a daily basis.



Engineering students use advanced technology, including an AeroLab wind tunnel and INSTRON Universal Testing Machines, in various department laboratories.

Cedarville's nursing students take their first clinical courses in the College's simulated hospital wing before gaining practical experience in hospitals in a five-county area.



The exceptional faculty in the Department of Science and Mathematics give students personal attention in the classroom and independent study laboratories.

Engineering Department Named

Cedarville College has named its Department of Engineering in honor of the late Dr. Elmer W. Engstrom, an internationally known engineer and president of RCA who actively shared his faith in Jesus Christ.

The recipient of 18 honorary doctorates and two knighthoods, Dr. Engstrom pioneered the development of electron radio tubes, television, radar, airborne television electronics, acoustics, and color television. He helped found and received the highest honors from several national and international professional engineering societies.

Dr. Engstrom was an active board member of the New York Bible Society and wrote many articles for Christian publications, the most popular being "A Scientist's Beliefs" which has been distributed around the world.

Before his death in 1984, Dr. Engstrom established a charitable trust, the trustees of which made a major grant to underwrite the expenses of launching Cedarville's engineering program.



Itineraries



**Dr. Paul Dixon,
President**

Canton, Ohio
Canton Baptist Temple
December 6

Chardon, Ohio
Chardon Baptist Church
December 13

St. Petersburg, Florida
Moody Keswick Bible Conference
January 16-23, 1993

Rochester, Michigan
First Baptist Church
January 31

Hazel Park, Michigan
Tabernacle Baptist Church
February 7

Boca Raton, Florida
Winter Bible Conference
February 28-March 5



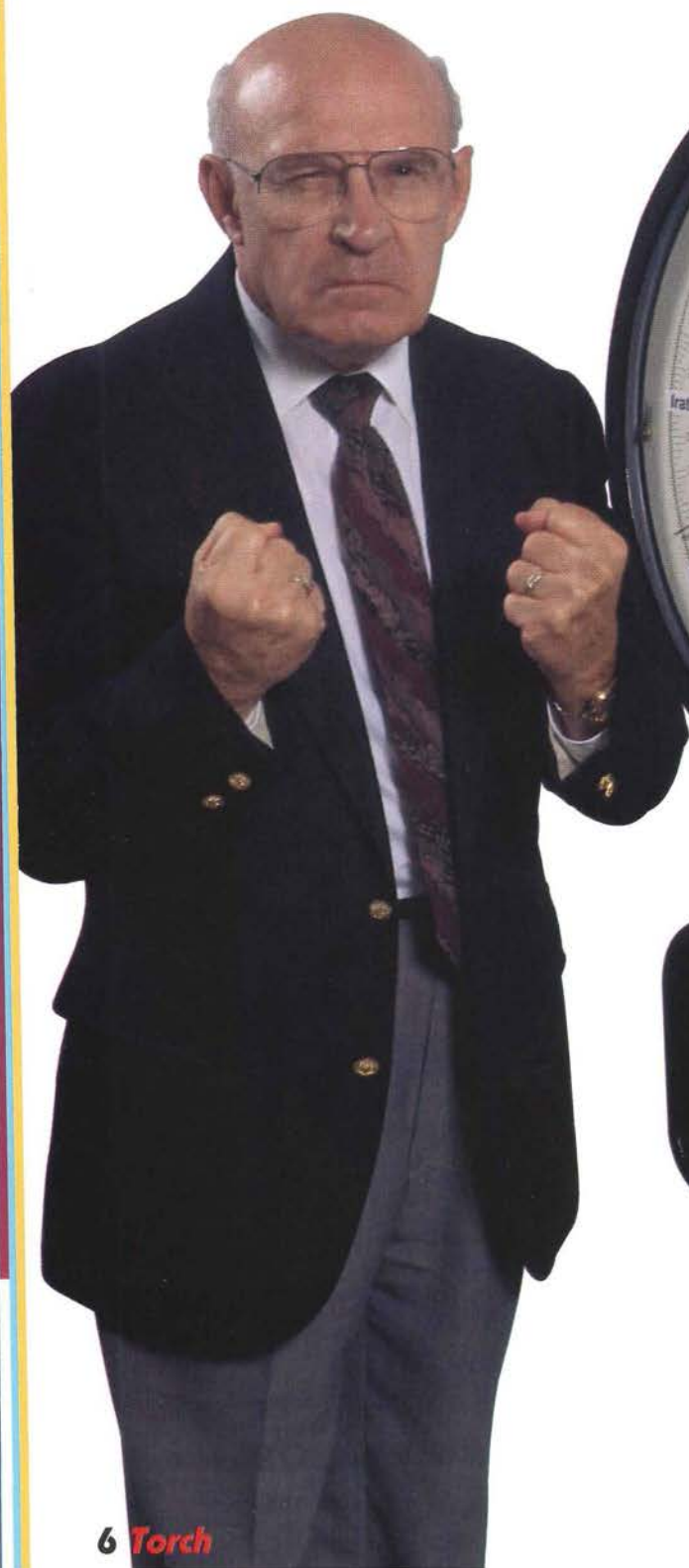
**Dr. James T. Jeremiah,
Chancellor**

Dayton, Ohio
95th Anniversary,
Emmanuel Baptist Church
December 11

El Cajon, California
Shadow Mountain
Community Church
December 13

Check Your Attitude— And Change It

Excerpted from *The Peacemaker*
by Ken Sande



When someone has wronged you and you are still feeling frustrated or hurt, it is difficult to overlook the offense. It is even more difficult if you are overly sensitive to the wrongs of others and tend to dwell excessively on what they have done. One way to guard against this problem is to check your attitude in the light of God's Word.

Paul's letter to the Philippians contains an excellent formula for examining one's attitudes during a conflict. Apparently Paul had heard that two friends in Philippi were having an argument. It must have been a significant one, because word of it had crossed the sea and reached Paul in prison.

Therefore, as part of his open letter to the church at Philippi, Paul took the time to urge these two women to seek peace (Philippians 4:2-9)....

Paul implicitly reminds the women that their conflict provides an opportunity to glorify God, to serve others, and to grow to be like Christ. He also emphasizes the importance of peace and unity in God's kingdom, and he says that Euodia and Syntyche should receive help from the church if they cannot resolve their dispute privately. Most

importantly, he reminds them that God is intimately involved in their situation and able to help them resolve it. Paul...focuses on the steps they must take to develop a proper attitude toward their situation and toward each other. Paul

has broken his instructions into five basic principles which you, too, can use whenever you are involved in a conflict.

1. Rejoice in the Lord always.

...What on earth is there to rejoice about when you are involved in a dispute? To begin with, you can rejoice over the most wonderful fact in your life: if you have put your trust in Jesus Christ, you are “in the Lord,” and your name is written “in the book of life.” If your opponent is a Christian, that person, too, has salvation. Nothing, not even the difficulties of a conflict, should ever overshadow the joy of having received forgiveness through Christ. The more you rejoice in that forgiveness, the easier it can be for you to forgive others.

You can also rejoice that God has given you the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the church to guide, strengthen, and support you. (If you are not rejoicing over these resources, you may be neglecting them.) If your opponent is a believer, these resources are available to him or her as well. As God works in you through these channels, you can receive reliable direction, grow in character, develop creative solutions, and see a return of genuine peace.

Finally, you can rejoice that your situation is not an accident. Knowing that God is sovereign and good, you can have confidence that He is working through this conflict for your ultimate good...That is much to rejoice about!

2. Let your gentleness be evident to all.

...The Greek word translated as “gentleness” in this passage is rich in meaning: “[*Epiaches*] means forbearing, largehearted, gentle, courteous, considerate, generous, lenient, moderate. In summary, it is describing a quality which is the opposite of irritability, rudeness, and abrasiveness; it is describing a quality that would make a person nice instead of nasty. It is saying that if you are a Christian, you can be a nice person.”¹ Being gentle in the midst of conflict produces several benefits,

especially when it is “evident to all.” It reflects Christ’s presence and power in your life, which pleases and honors Him. It also guards you from speaking and acting harshly, which would only make matters worse. Finally, your gentleness may encourage similar behavior in your opponent.

Gentleness is especially appropriate if the person who wronged you is experiencing unusual stress....

3. Replace anxiety with prayer.

The third step in developing a godly attitude toward conflict is to get rid of anxious thoughts. Paul is not just talking about trivial concerns. *Merimnao*, the Greek word translated as “anxious,” means laden with cares and trouble, pressured, squeezed, burdened, under stress. These feelings tend to multiply when we are in the middle of a dispute, especially if it involves a person who is very important to us or if valuable interests are at stake.

Since Paul knew that anxious thoughts have a way of creeping back into our minds, no matter how hard we try to ignore them, he instructs us to replace worrying with “prayer and petition, with thanksgiving.” When you are in a dispute, it will be natural to dwell on your difficult circumstances or on the wrong things that the other person has done or may do to you. The best way to overcome this negative thinking is to thank God for the many things He has already done for you in this situation (and in others) and to request His assistance in dealing with your current challenges (cf. Matthew 6:25-34).... When you place your focus on God through prayer, you can begin to experience something that does not seem logical: the hostility, anxiety, and inner conflict with which you have been dealing will begin to give way to a peace so unexpected that Paul says it will “transcend all understanding.” ...When God works in His people, things begin

to happen that don’t make sense to the world. This brings Him glory.

4. See things as they really are.

As you replace anxiety with prayer, you will be ready to follow Paul’s fourth instruction, which is to develop a more accurate view of your opponent. If you respond to conflict like most people, you will tend to focus on the negative characteristics of the person who is disagreeing with you, exaggerating faults and overlooking virtues. The more distorted your perspective becomes, the more likely you are to imagine the worst about your opponent, which may lead you to misjudge completely his or her values, motives, and actions. A negative perspective usually also leads to bitterness, to dwelling on your hurt and thinking how undeserving of it you are.

The best way to overcome this prejudicial tendency is to think deliberately about aspects of your opponent that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable—in short, “excellent, or praiseworthy.” Paul is not saying that we should think *only* about the good things in others, for he clearly understands the necessity of confronting sin and encouraging repentance (Galatians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:16). Rather, Paul is teaching us to counterbalance our natural tendency to focus only on what is bad in those who oppose us. This change does not come about naturally for most of us. It requires a deliberate decision, followed by perseverance. If you shift your focus to positive things, you can experience the principle described in Proverbs 11:27: “He who seeks good finds good will, but evil comes to him who searches for it.”...

Even if a change in focus does not allow you to overlook every offense, it can often help you in two other ways. First, by recalling what is good in another person, you often will realize how much you will lose if your differences

are not resolved. Many marriages, friendships, and business relationships are damaged or destroyed when people focus exclusively on a point of disagreement and forget about all that they have enjoyed in and with one another. Remembering the good may provide the motivation it takes to work through the painful differences that temporarily separate people.

Second, the process of thinking right can be contagious. The more negatively you view opponents, the more inclined they will be to view you the same way. Conversely, as you focus on what is good about another person and openly acknowledge those qualities, he or she may begin to do the same in return. As you gain a more accurate assessment of each other and as good will grows between you, you will both have a greater freedom to deal honestly and

realistically with your differences....

5. Practice what you've learned.

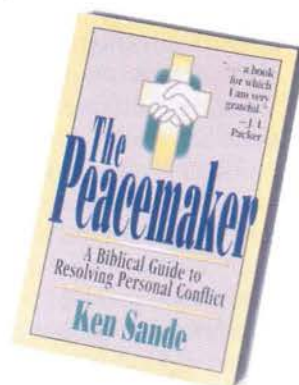
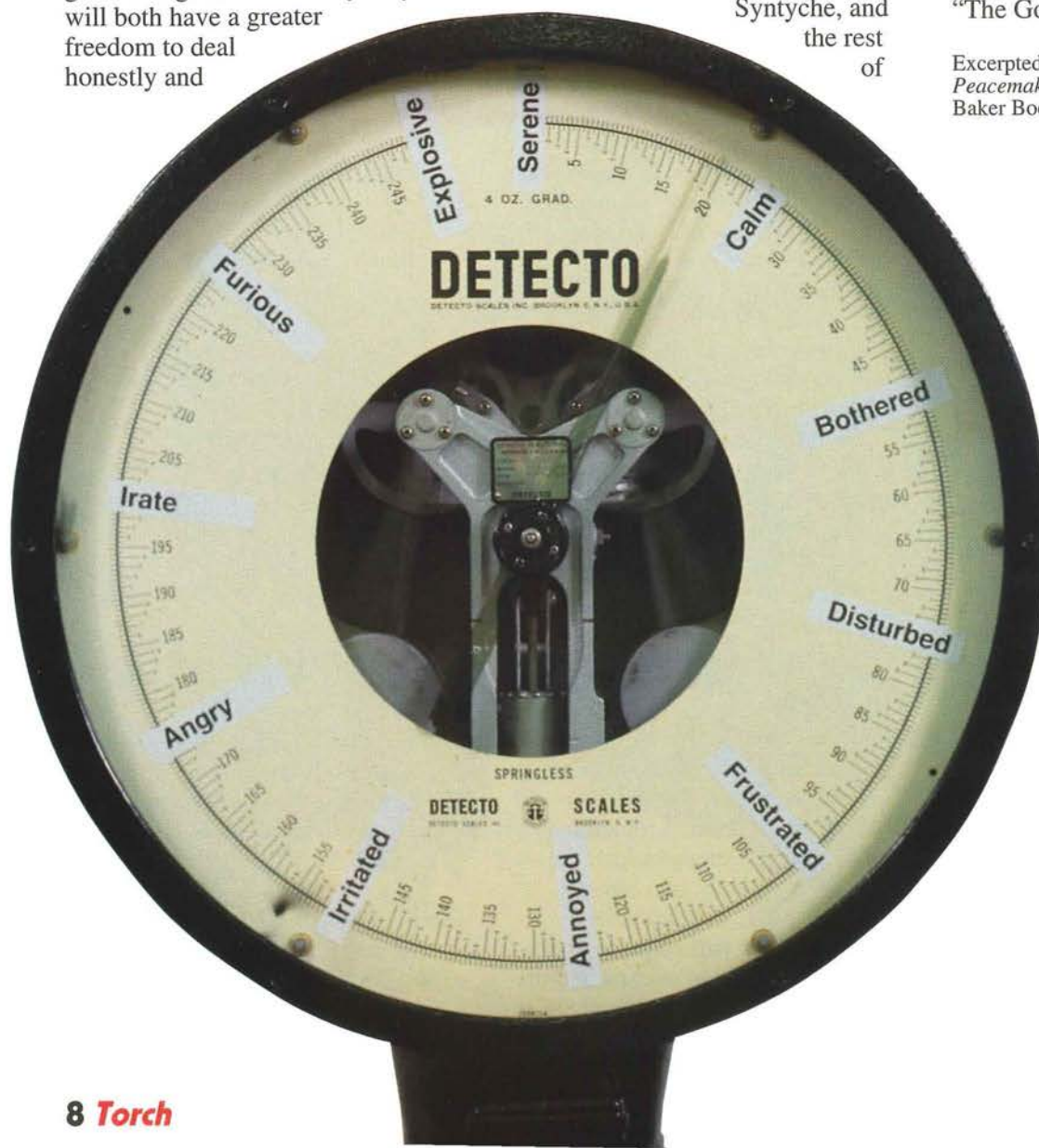
Paul's final instruction to Euodia and Syntyche (and to us) is both straightforward and encouraging: "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you." Paul knew what he was talking about when it came to conflict. He had to deal with intense conflict and opposition during his stay with the Christians in Philippi (see Acts 16:16-40), so they had seen him in action. He had taught and demonstrated how to deal with disputes, but he understood our human tendency to be hearers rather than doers of the Word. Therefore, he exhorted Euodia,

Syntyche, and
the rest
of

the Philippian church to put their knowledge into practice. Otherwise, all their learning was in vain.

Paul's instruction will apply equally well in *your* life. When you find yourself estranged from another person, especially when that person professes to be a follower of Jesus, it is not good enough simply to study the Bible—knowledge isn't really knowledge (in a biblical sense) unless you put it into practice. When you use God's principles to check your attitude and make some changes, you will discover how much easier it becomes to overlook minor offenses. Even when further dialogue or action is necessary, it can be surprisingly productive when you practice the peacemaking principles contained in God's Word. Regardless of what else happens, as long as you are faithful to your Master, you can know the truth of Paul's promise: "The God of peace will be with you."

Excerpted from pages 64-70 of *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande, published by Baker Books. Used by permission.



¹Wayne Mack, *A Homework Manual for Biblical Counseling*, vol. 1 (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1979), p.12.



In The Middle

An Interview With Professional Peacemakers

Should you try to be a peacemaker when others are in conflict? How can you help them and avoid being caught in the middle?

Ken Sande, author of *The Peacemaker*, believes Christians have a responsibility to seek peace in people's lives. "Christian peacemaking is a lot like witnessing, in that everyone is called to be a witness to some degree, just as everyone is called to be a peacemaker to some degree." Dr. Chuck Dolph, professor of psychology at Cedarville College, agrees. He maintains that while the Lord has specially gifted some people in this area, everyone can be a peacemaker.

When should you attempt to help someone in conflict? Consider these three factors:

1. Your relationship to the person.

Sande notes that the closer your relationship is with another Christian, the more responsibility you have to help. Ask yourself whether this person would be more likely to accept help from someone else. If not, the Lord may be saying, "You're in a position to help—get on with it!"

2. The seriousness of the conflict.

Dolph has an active counseling practice and believes people should intervene in destructive conflicts. "It's often dangerous to get

involved in situations where you're not wanted. But where people are destroying each other, someone should intervene."

3. Your understanding of the area of conflict.

Sande, an attorney, points out that few of us would understand patent law well enough to mediate a dispute between rival inventors. But when a friend is having a conflict with a spouse or coworker, you probably know enough to help. If you are close to the person, the conflict is serious, and you understand the area of conflict, then you should talk to the person. You can give advice or offer to mediate the conflict. In rare cases, you may need to recommend the person get professional help. Dolph suggests people should look for competent, non-professional assistance first. He believes Christians should trust those in the church who have the gifts to help. Sande notes that in Matthew 18:15-20, "Jesus instructs us to make a sincere effort to resolve conflicts informally. Only if those efforts are obviously not succeeding and there's an indication that further damage will be done should we get help from professionals."

If you are in the position to mediate a conflict, what can you do to help?

1. Pray.

"The main way we help other people is through prayer," says Dolph. Sande reminds us that there is only one Reconciler, Jesus Christ, and while you do not have all the answers, He does.

2. Be objective.

Dolph notes, "If you are a closer friend to one of the antagonists, chances are the other one will think you are biased. Conflicts start with two persons having conflict, and before you know it two or three people, or whole departments, are pulled into the conflict—a just person won't get drawn into the conflict." Instead, you need to be committed to win-win situations.

3. Listen.

You need to be willing to listen to the cases of both sides. Sande reminds us, "When people are in

conflict, one of their most urgent concerns is for their opponent and anyone else to understand what is going on inside of them. The only way you can do that is to sit and listen, and listen..."

4. Base your advice on biblical principles.

Sande believes you should follow Christ's example and question people in a dispute before giving advice. But if they do not have biblically consistent answers, it is your responsibility to turn to God's Word and show them that God has very clear and specific guidelines on moral issues. Sande adds, "Of course, we have to be careful not to step beyond what Scripture says and impose our own legalistic ideas on people."

5. Train to be a mediator.

Dolph says mediation basically means challenging people to be more Christ-like. "The measure of that is not how much you get, it is how much you give up—to live at peace with other persons is a matter of self-sacrifice. People come to a mediator because they want something. The mediator often has the paradoxical job of asking them to give something up." This is not an easy task, but it is important. Dolph calls peacemaking "a noble calling, a much-needed service."

As with any gift, you must practice and train to develop the gift of peacemaking. The National Association of Christian Conciliation Services is committed to locating and training peacemakers within the local church. The basic program involves 50 hours of audio tape instruction. For more information write Ken Sande at:

Christian Conciliation Service of Montana
1537 Avenue D, Suite 352
Billings, MT 59102

Dr. Charles Dolph is a 1974 Cedarville graduate and a professor of psychology at the College. He also maintains a private counseling practice. Dr. Dolph has a special interest in older people and consults with nursing homes on issues of aging.



How Can I Soar With The Eagles

WHEN I HAVE TO WORK WITH THE TURKEYS?

by Dr. David Robey

This popular bumper sticker cleverly but truthfully identifies the feelings of those people who find their world of work made more difficult by the people with whom they work. The desire to be a productive and satisfied employee is challenged if not defeated by conflict with other employees. Even though interpersonal conflict appears in all areas of life, it may be most troubling to the Christian who experiences conflict with non-Christians in an employment situation. Conflict will bring feelings of anger and resentment or, even worse, may harden the Christian's heart to the point of indifference. The question then is, "How can I honor the Lord and do a good job as an employee when I have to work with such difficult people?" While some Christians seek to solve the problem by avoiding it, the only way to triumph over the discouragement of interpersonal conflict is to address it.

Conflict Is Real

Conflict between individuals is common in our world. The daily news clearly attests to personality conflicts in governments, businesses, and homes. Interpersonal conflict has been a part of life since Adam and Eve failed each other and God in the Garden. The Bible chronicles



interpersonal conflicts between Joseph and his brothers, David and his king, and Paul and his missionary friend Barnabas. Scripture does not condone interpersonal conflict but it certainly talks about it. Even though Paul encouraged us to live at peace with all men, he was careful to qualify that injunction with the phrase, "if it be possible" (Romans 12:18).

Scripture indicates that it is the Christian's responsibility to address interpersonal conflict. Matthew said that reconciliation with a brother is so important that it should precede offering a gift to God (Matthew 5:24). The biblical principle of addressing a conflict with a Christian is just as true with a non-Christian. Fear and uncertainty in the believer's heart are used by Satan to discourage attempts at resolving conflict. But we should join with Paul who prayed for courage and wisdom in his dealings with others (Ephesians 6:19-20). While *resolving* the conflict, totally getting rid of it, is the desired outcome, it usually occurs as a secondary result of learning to *manage* the conflict.

Conflict Should Be Managed

Conflict management is accomplished through identifying the problem and responding to it biblically. This may not be as simple as it sounds. Persons in conflict seldom find it easy to identify accurately the cause of the conflict. One common source of interpersonal conflict can be titled interpretation of events.

Conflict participants tend to be prisoners of their own perspective. "I know what happened! I heard her say it!" However, the verbal message is usually only a small part of the total message. Bob, a Christian, finds his coworker Linda, a non-Christian, to be a very difficult person. He feels her rudeness, sarcasm, and attack of his work is

prompted by her dislike for Christians. He is not happy in his work and feels that he is suffering for his faith. While it is true that Linda does not like Bob, her dislike is based on her feeling that Bob spends more time talking about religion than doing his work. Linda feels that Bob is a good employee but could be an excellent one if he would get his priorities in order. She also is wary of religious fanatics due to a bad childhood experience with a cult. Linda is trying to get Bob to improve his work quality through teasing him about his work. Bob interprets her actions as hostile, and he believes that the only way to solve their conflict is for Linda to become a Christian. So, he takes every opportunity to talk about God, but every time he brings up the subject, Linda becomes more angry.

Bob and Linda clearly are locked in a lose-lose situation. To manage this conflict, Bob must expand his perception of the problem. Neither Bob nor Linda knows where the other is coming from. Bob assumes Linda is hostile to the gospel, and Linda assumes Bob is a religious fanatic who is not interested in giving his best to his job. They both want the other person to change behavior but they do not know how to get that message across.

In his best selling book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey states, "If you want to interact effectively with me, to influence me—your spouse, your child, your neighbor, your boss, your coworker, your friend—you first have to understand me." Bob should make the time to say to Linda, "An important part of my job is working with you. What can I do to help us work together better?" Hopefully, Linda will be honest with him and explain her distrust of religion as well as her desire for Bob to reach his full

potential at work. Bob's decision to increase his work level and refocus his testimony may provide the only way to ever reach Linda. Only as Bob learns to manage his conflict will he ever be able to resolve it.

And, if Linda continues to resist Bob and his ideas no matter what changes he makes, Bob should implement a conflict management program. Jesus provides this when he said; "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28). This is God's formula for controlling the personal pain that can rise out of an interpersonal conflict. Even if the conflict is not resolved, management of it allows the involved Christian to respond to it biblically, continuously praying, and working for the healing power of the Holy Spirit.

In his book, *Coping with Difficult People*, Dr. Robert Bramson states, "Effective coping...is the sum of those actions that you can take to right the power balance, to minimize the impact of others' difficult behavior." The Christian can emotionally right the power balance only through love. Jesus told His disciples that the best way to remove the power of discouragement from their enemies was to treat them as friends. The text reveals that this love is to be manifested in outward actions and personal prayer.

Conflict Can Be Beneficial

Nationally known speaker Kay Waldo Cronkite believes that understanding our interpersonal conflicts will help us know ourselves. As we understand what causes our conflicts with others, we can discover the ingredients that are necessary for strong relationships. Recognizing conflict may actually help identify

personal weaknesses and prompt better listening skills, a softer response to verbal attacks, and a desire to grow as a friend. Cronkite extols the benefit of conflict by stating, "All individual growth can be linked to the facing and managing of conflict." If this is true, then growth is not possible without recognizing and managing those elements in our life that bring us conflict.

James told his readers to count it all joy when they faced difficult situations, for those situations would teach them to rely on God. Paul states clearly that the goal of all of life is to demonstrate God to a world needing His love.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

(1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1)

Interpersonal conflict is often a painful reality for the Christian. To overcome the discouragement it brings, we need to address it and respond to it biblically. If we learn to manage our interpersonal conflicts, the situation may become God's tool for spiritual growth.

Dr. David Robey, associate professor of communication arts at Cedarville College, also directs the forensics program and the Village Players at the College. He is an experienced actor, speaker, and communications consultant.




The World At Our Doorstep

by Dr. Barbara Loach



Map courtesy of American Map Corporation, Maspeth, NY



“Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world; red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight; Jesus loves the little children of the world.”

Many of us recall singing that chorus enthusiastically as children. As adults, we give mental assent to the truth of the message, but ways to process that truth may seem vague and elusive. As Christ welcomed people from all walks of life and a variety of cultures, the Jewish leaders of His day were scandalized. In our changing society, however, cultural diversity is becoming more and more a part of our daily life. How we respond to it depends on how well we understand scriptural teaching in this area.

The church urgently needs to build bridges of cultural understanding by which Christians can reach out and more willingly embrace people from all cultures. While we profess admiration for those missionaries who invest their lives to carry the message of salvation to people in faraway places and strange cultures, do we ourselves sense the need to reach out to those around us who may be different? Are we willing to push beyond our own comfort zones in order to establish bridges with others who live and work in our midst?

In response to the question, Who is my neighbor? Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to show clearly that anyone who reaches out to someone in need understands the command to love your neighbor as yourself. Along the same line, Scripture also

gives us principles and instructions for dealing with “strangers” or “aliens.” In the Old Testament, strangers were those people who were not Israelites, but who chose to identify with and live among God’s people. By extension, it is possible to consider as a stranger anyone who moves into and settles down in our community. Several times in the book of Exodus, the Lord reminds the Israelites to care for widows, orphans, and strangers. The motivation is one of empathy: “And you shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you were also strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 23:9 NASV).

In the New Testament, Jesus broadens the scope of the concept by indicating that our treatment of others is an indication of our love for Him (Matthew 25:31-46). In 1 John 3:16-18, the true test of our love for God lies in our willingness to meet the needs of others—our actions must bear out what we profess.

At heart is the recognition of God’s grace freely bestowed to each one of us, regardless of race or nationality. Our cultural identity is part of God’s design for us, so we should value individuals from all backgrounds as God has created them.

Have you ever been on an extended trip away from home and felt alone and vulnerable because you were unfamiliar with the surroundings and habits of the people? About ten years ago I spent one summer in a study-abroad program in Lisbon, Portugal. I stayed with a family who spoke no English, and the only Americans I knew were the Southwells, Cedarville graduates serving as missionaries in a town a half hour away. For some reason, I could not make any contacts, even among the other students in the program, in order to have some companionship. The study-abroad agreement did not include a meal contract, so I had to eat out twice a day, every

day for six weeks. Since Portugal is on the Atlantic coast, the cuisine includes a lot of seafood—unfortunately, I don’t really care that much for seafood!

Consider the feelings of those strangers with whom you come into contact, particularly those folks from other countries who are now living in our country for a variety of reasons. The feelings of loneliness they experience are probably very similar to those I experienced, and which all of us feel from time to time. A friendly face, empathy, and kindness will minister tremendously. The same is true for others who are not strangers but who belong to another race.

The first principle of cross-cultural understanding is to recognize the fact of our common humanity—deep down, we all have desires, fears, and fundamental needs such as significance and belonging. Just as Israel was to demonstrate empathy for strangers based on their shared experience, so we should try to find ways to put ourselves in the other person’s position and understand his/her point of view. One easy way to understand another culture is to read something about its history and traditions. Read authors of that particular cultural point of view, rather than second-hand reports or interpretations. Another way is by sitting down with the other person in a comfortable setting and genuinely and respectfully asking about his background experiences and circumstances. By all means, be careful to avoid a condescending or patronizing attitude that would make the other person feel belittled or not taken seriously. Your interest in the other person’s culture can create a bridge of understanding because it shows your respect for the other person and his ways. While we certainly recognize that the absolutes of Scripture provide standards for moral conduct in every culture, many of our

actions and habits represent cultural preferences and choices not regulated by Scriptural principles. You may not accept all of the other person's ways of doing things, but you can at least understand a little more about the reasons why he acts as he does.

Secondly, don't let your knowledge inadvertently become a barrier: see people as individuals, not as stereotypes or statistics. People in other countries usually stereotype Americans as loud, informal, rich, generous, lovers of baseball and hamburgers—do you fit into all of those categories? Recognize which patterns of behavior are acceptable for a particular culture, but do not let those patterns dictate how you respond to someone. Related to this notion of individuality, always try to separate the person from the problem. Some ethnic groups are erroneously portrayed as troublemakers by the media or other sources that promote stereotypes. But of course all racial groups are subject to the sinfulness of human nature, a reality which is often unfortunately compounded for some by the dilemmas of economic,

political, and social pressures. No one individual is solely responsible for the perceived problems caused by a particular group.

What are the benefits of making the effort to understand another culture? First of all, we get to enjoy the richness of that culture's traditions, customs, and beliefs—the Hispanic and Oriental respect for family, for example, can challenge us to spend more quality time with our own families. My own experiences in Spain and Latin America have challenged me to become more people-oriented and less time-oriented; that is, choosing to spend quality time

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with someone rather than give in to the pressures of the clock to keep moving.

Learning about another culture is like looking into a mirror—you can't help learning more about yourself and those things that you value when you see yourself from someone else's perspective. Those of us who have spent significant time with people from

other cultures can recount valuable insights (and probably humbling experiences) we have received from those contacts.

Finally, building cultural bridges instead of barriers on an individual basis becomes a clear expression of peacemaking. The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, conveys much more than just the absence of war—it is the establishment of right relations with other human beings, fulfilling God's kingdom purpose here on earth. It is critical that we identify our own personal attitudes towards people of other cultures and that we progressively operate more and more on the principles of grace and *shalom*.

Admittedly, such openness involves taking risks, and also a willingness to seek or give forgiveness when offenses occur. But we have a profound responsibility to model respect, understanding, and empathy since others, especially children, learn from what they see in us. Instead of furthering distrust or fear towards a particular race, we can choose to treat others humanly and biblically. "Red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in *my* sight" when seen through the lenses of God's love and grace.

A 1977 Cedarville graduate, Dr. Barbara Loach serves as associate professor of Spanish at the College. She also studied in Spain, Portugal, and Quebec and has traveled in Chile and Puerto Rico as well. Dr. Loach led students on MIS experiences to Argentina and Mexico.



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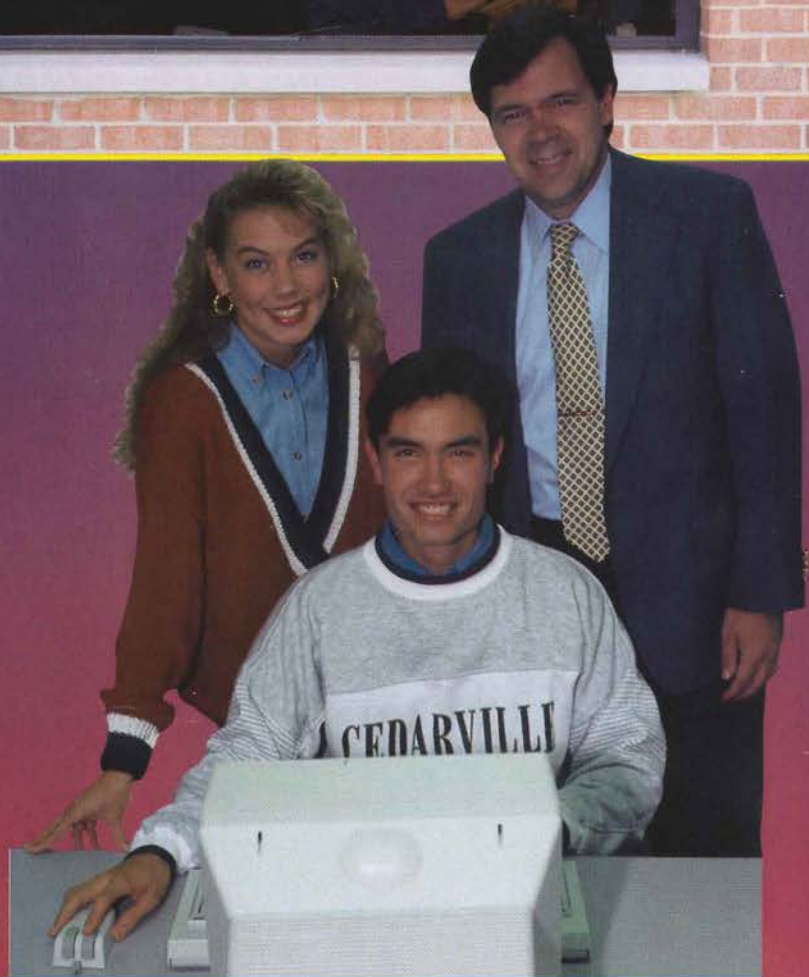
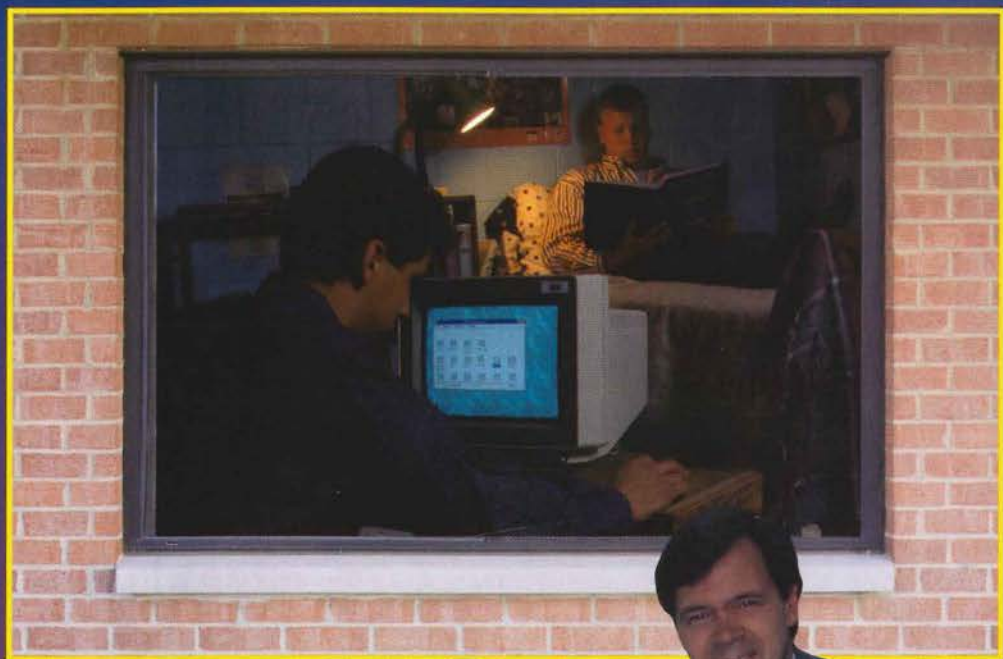
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